

Confidence in Salvation: The Meaning of the Sanctuary

by Fritz Guy

For the earliest Seventh-day Adventists, the doctrine of the sanctuary was "the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844."¹ So, far from being merely an interesting insight into an aspect of transcendent reality, it was for them the theological validation of their experience and their hopes. It was the means by which these Adventists could come to terms with their unfulfilled expectations, in which they had invested both their financial resources and their religious identity — indeed, the very meaning of their lives.² In that moment of extraordinary spiritual intensity, the doctrine of the sanctuary "opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand had directed the great Advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people."³ Thus, they could see that, although they had been mistaken, they had not been utterly deluded; and they still had a mission and a message.⁴

That, however, was 136 years ago, in a historical situation that was very different from ours. In terms of technological and cultural change, we are as far removed from 1844 as 1844 was from the time of the New Testament. Ours is a time of hand-held electronic calculators, instant global communication (audio plus video in color) and jet lag. Ours is also a time when we are aware of the sociological dynamics of religious groups,

including apocalyptic movements,⁵ and we recognize the historical conditionedness of theological understanding. Furthermore, we have not lived through the Advent expectation of 1844 or its bitter disappointment; however much we respect the Adventist pioneers and want to identify with their experience, it remains *their* experience, not ours. So we must ask the question, What does the doctrine of the sanctuary mean for us today, in 1980? What is its theological and experiential significance now? What difference does it — or should it — make in our lives?

If we cannot answer this kind of question, or if we do not attend to it, we should not be surprised if the doctrine of the sanctuary is regarded, by most people outside Adventism and by some within, as a theological curiosity, a relic of the mid-nineteenth century — as strange and as irrelevant to our present lives as a celluloid collar or a buggy whip.

The construction of a fully developed, intelligible understanding of the sanctuary is part of the present vocation of Adventism. It is part of our obligation to the contemporary Christian world — along with a theology of the Sabbath and a theology of the Second Advent. To be an Adventist means experiencing holy time as the presence of ultimacy in our lives, with its implications of both dignity and responsibility. It certainly means looking to the future as the divinely initiated realization of our hope and the fulfillment of our destiny. But being an Adventist also means to know the liberating assurance of the ongoing ministry of our High Priest in the immediate presence of God.

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Many persons in many disciplines and with many different backgrounds of culture, education and experience need to participate in exploring the meaning of the heavenly sanctuary. What is important is not what we think about architecture, but how we relate what is being accomplished there to our understanding about God and ourselves.

The basic meaning of the sanctuary is that God continues to act redemptively. The ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary is a revelatory symbol of continuing divine activity.

This general understanding may be supported by both positive and negative reasoning. The positive argument is simple enough and comes from the fact that Hebrews 8:5 describes the Old Testament sanctuary as "a copy [*hupodeigma*] and shadow [*skia*] of the heavenly sanctuary." This is a continuation of the general New Testament understanding that salvation in Jesus the Messiah is the fulfillment and thus the ultimate significance of the ancient ritual. The evident correspondence between the Old Testament sanctuary and the sanctuary in heaven is in itself enough to suggest a similarity of function.

The negative argument is somewhat more complicated. First, the significance of any element of created reality is not found in the nature of its matter or structure, but rather its function. Thus, for example, the meaning of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper derives not from their "breadness" and "wine-ness" but from their function of making the self-sacrifice and suffering of God in the death of Jesus newly present to our awareness and powerful in our lives. Second, we are almost wholly ignorant of the nature of heaven; all we know about it is that it is the transcendent reality where the presence of God is "centered" or "most readily perceived," and that the difference between earthly and heavenly reality is not absolute, for that would make it impossible for us to understand anything at all about it. So the revelatory purpose of the various descriptions of heaven (such as those in Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation) is not to satisfy our

curiosity about this particular kind of reality; their purpose is rather to communicate an understanding of God and His attitudes, concerns and actions in relation to the created universe. In other words, the correspondence between earthly and heavenly reality is best understood in terms of eternal principles, ultimate values and interpersonal relationships. For example, the "books of heaven" may be seen as symbols of the fact — all too easily ignored in our present existence — that our decisions and actions have an enduring effect; they "make a difference" both for God and for the totality of created reality.

But it is essential that this negative argument about the meaning of the sanctuary in heaven be properly understood. It is by no means a subjectivist or existentialist "demythologizing" of the language with which we talk about heaven and its sanctuary. It is not a "projection" of human feelings or experience onto a "cosmic screen." On the contrary, it explicitly affirms an objective, transcendent reality to which this language refers. The point of this symbolic language is to indicate that, although the exact nature of this reality is not known (or knowable) by human beings, the fact of its reality and its revelatory function are indeed known, and therefore that it is meaningful to us. To use the vocabulary of some recent philosophers of religion: like God-talk, sanctuary-talk has cognitive significance. Since reality is not identical with empirical specifiability, meaning is not limited to literal signification.

As a symbol of the saving activity of God, the sanctuary in heaven presumably exists and functions for someone's benefit. But surely not God's; for salvation is *His* idea and activity, and the heavenly sanctuary is *His* way of communicating its meaning. The purpose and function of this sanctuary are thus evidently for the benefit of created beings; it is a means by which finite intelligence can better understand the infinite God's solution to the complex problem of sin. What then is its message, its revelation? What can it say that has not been said already — and better — in the historical revelation of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth?

If part of the total solution of the problem of sin is to "vindicate the character of God before the universe,"⁷ it is certainly plausible to suppose that the sanctuary in heaven may have some revelatory function for the benefit of nonhuman, moral beings. If this is so, then the sanctuary in heaven is a means by which the moral universe as a whole is involved in the solution of the problem of sin. For this solution — which includes not only the divine forgiveness that makes possible the salvation of human beings, but also the revelation of the character of God that ensures the security of the universe — is in fact a solution only if it is understood to be a solution. (Here we may well recall that it is the function of religious and theological symbols not only to point to a reality other than themselves, but also to facilitate the experience of that reality.⁸ Presumably, this is true for the whole of the intelligent universe and not only for human beings.)

But surely there is more to the meaning of the biblical language about the heavenly sanctuary than its possible revelatory function for the larger universe. For the references in Hebrews, as well as those in Revelation, quite clearly intend to communicate a meaning that is directly and experientially relevant to their readers — in the first place, to the early Christian communities, and, in the second place, to their spiritual descendants. It is the failure of Christianity as a whole to recognize and grasp this meaning that gives contemporary Adventism the responsibility of systematically developing and effectively expressing a theology of the sanctuary.

In addition to defining the meaning of the heavenly sanctuary, another part of our task is identifying and explicating its significance for our understanding of other subjects such as God, creation and humanity, Christ, salvation, the Christian life, the church and the end of history. We will explore these implications in relation to the two aspects of Christ's ministry in the sanctuary: intercession and judgment.

The first and most important implication

of Christ's intercession in the heavenly sanctuary is that through Him we can have immediate, direct access to the God of the universe. This is the central thesis of Hebrews: Christ is our Mediator. Although God is the Infinite and Self-Existent One, who is never less than, and never other than, absolute holiness and whose majesty is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), there is no barrier, no

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waiting period. The holiness of deity is not diminished, and the frailty of humanity is not denied; but the ontological and moral distance between deity and humanity is bridged by our High Priest, who is Himself the Bridge.⁹

We may understand this access to God as comprising three interrelated elements. First, because our Intercessor is truly human and has genuinely confronted the temptation, evil and ambiguity of our existence, He is "with" us and "belongs" to us. He knows what our life is, and thus He is "our man in heaven."¹⁰ Not only was incarnation a necessary qualification for His priesthood, but it also continues to be part of the meaning of that priesthood. Second, through Him we know what God is; we have access to the inner character of deity. Christ is the "knowability" of God.¹¹ In Him we recognize that it is the nature of God to be self-giving, suffering love, which takes concrete form in His concern for the deprived and despised (Matt. 25:31-46), in His forgiveness and restoration of sinners (John 8:2-11), in His joy over the recovery of the lost (Luke 15). And third, in Christ the problem of sin is entirely and permanently solved; the barrier of sin that would otherwise have been absolute and eternal is penetrated by His death and resurrection. In short, the fact that Christ is our High Priest means that the Wholly Other is the Wholly Accessible.

Another implication of the intercession of

Christ is that God is still active in our behalf; the work of salvation continues. In a certain sense, atonement is still going on. "Atonement" is first of all God's giving of Himself for us in His Son. This is the great event of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). But the activity of atonement does not stop there; it is a present process as well as a past event.

This quality of continuation is what makes the death of Jesus different from all other events in history. Many events have been important and have changed the course of history: the death of Socrates, the fall of Rome, the Declaration of Independence. But however momentous, their impact inevitably decreases in the course of time, as they merge into the totality of historical actuality. Like a rock thrown into a lake, they make an initial splash, and their ripples move outward in an expanding circle; but the ripples also get progressively smaller as they expand in diameter. The ministry of Christ as our High Priest in heaven means that His death on the cross is utterly unique in that it remains fully and powerfully present; its importance to God and to humanity is as great now as it has ever been. It does not fade away.¹²

Significantly, we do not say that Christ was our High Priest; we say that He is our High Priest. He not only did something to save us 19 and a half centuries ago; He is active for us now, today, at this very moment. The process of reconciliation, of forgiveness, of healing, of restoring broken relationships and shattered lives — all this goes on, because "He always lives to make intercession" for "those who draw near to God through Him" (Heb. 7:25). Thus, the atonement made at the cross becomes atonement for us. (This is, quite obviously, not a suggestion that the atonement at the cross was in any way incomplete or insufficient; on the contrary, the fact that we can speak of atonement as a continuing process is a result of the perfect adequacy of the atonement as a saving event.)

God's ongoing activity in our behalf may be seen in the continuing presence of transcendent grace in our lives. The intercession of our High Priest means that there is assistance to resist the Enemy, who tempts not only to sin but also to discouragement and

despair. And if we sin in spite of this assistance, there is forgiveness: "We have an advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1).

A third implication of the intercession of our High Priest is that our salvation is an objective fact. The basis of our confidence is not our own experience. We are notoriously subject to the influence of our own biochemistry, the actions and attitudes of other people and even the weather. We have struggle with sin; we have questions we cannot answer, problems we cannot solve, doubts we cannot deny. But in spite of all this, our assurance remains. For "Jesus as High Priest is a fixed, immovable datum. No matter what we may *feel* or opponents of our religion may assert, He remains High Priest in heaven for us."¹³

The fact that salvation is an objective reality reminds us also that it is entirely a matter of grace. On this, the Puritans were right; as long as we have a High Priest in heaven, not only is there no room for the mediation of a human priesthood, neither is there room for the feeling of human achievement. Just as the event of atonement at the cross is a gift, so the ongoing process of atonement is a gift. Anything we may do by way of witness or service, any victory over sin we may experience, is necessarily preceded by and dependent on the ministry of our High Priest.

Yet a fourth implication of this intercessory ministry is that human beings have transcendent significance. This significance, this dignity, appears in two respects. On the one hand, the ministry of our High Priest is located in heaven itself, which is the heart and epitome of created reality; intercession for us there signifies the cosmic relevance of our salvation. And on the other hand, our High Priest ministers in our behalf in the immediate presence of God — literally, "in the face of God" (*tō prosōpō tou theou*, Heb. 9:24). Thus, the shape and meaning of our human lives make a difference to the Ultimate Reality that is the reason and ground of all reality.

A fifth implication of Christ's ongoing intercession is that the church is the commu-

nity of the great High Priest. That is, His ministry, which is the continuing actualization of the atonement made at the cross, is the focus of the church's worship and the basis of its unity. This is the center of its life, the motivation of its mission and the source of its power. The church may have plans and programs, and it may "manage by objectives"; but it knows itself to be the community of the High Priest. It is, therefore, essentially a community that worships, that is concerned more about what He is doing than about what it is doing.¹⁴

As the community of the High Priest, it knows that any kind of human mediation is not only unnecessary, but also impossible; no earthly authorization is required or adequate to establish the ultimate meaning of one's life. Therefore, we can say that there are no priests; there is only the One High Priest. Or we can make precisely the same point in the opposite way: we can say (with Luther and Calvin) that we are all priests; for we are all alike incorporated into His transcendent priesthood, and we are all called to minister divine grace with Him. Thus, we are a community with a High Priest as our Head and with His priesthood as our vocation.

To integrate these five implications into a single idea is to recapitulate the meaning of Hebrews in a single powerful word: *assurance*. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Because we can have immediate, direct access to God, because God is still active in our behalf, because our salvation is an objective reality, because human being has transcendent significance and because we are a community that is called to share His priesthood — in short, because of the ministry of our High Priest, we can live in full assurance.

Turning to the other complementary aspect of the high-priestly ministry of Christ, we see equally clear and equally important theological implications of the work of judgment.

In the first place, the fact of judgment means that God takes us seriously, not only

as members of the total reality of human being, but as individual persons. In the "books" mentioned in some of the apocalyptic descriptions of judgment, there are "names,"¹⁵ indicating the transcendent significance of personal identity. We are not merely parts of a larger whole; the meaning of our existence is not finally dependent on the communities (familial, ethnic, religious, national) to which we belong, often with little or no choice in the matter. Although we are certainly influenced by these communities and our relationships to them and within them, our destiny is finally determined by our own decisions regarding the values and ideals with which we identify our individual selfhood. And insofar as eschatological judgment involves the divine confirmation and disclosure of these decisions, our individual lives have a cosmic impact; they are a testimony to our personal evaluation of the issues of the "great controversy" between ultimate good and ultimate evil.

God also takes us seriously as responsible persons whose decisions He will respect even if they contradict His intentions for us and our destiny. So the nature of our final future is determined by our own choices, not God's.

In the second place, divine judgment means that all of our decisions and actions are important; nothing is irrelevant or inconsequential, and nothing is meaningless or worthless. There is significance even in the "idle word" (Matt. 12:36), for our spontaneous, unplanned and un-self-conscious talk is often a distressingly accurate reflection of our inner attitudes and our real identity. Furthermore, most overt actions have some impact on others, influencing their lives in one way or another. And finally, every decision is potentially determinative of eternal destiny, since it can function as a turn from which there is no turning back.

The total inclusiveness of divine judgment is also a reminder that there is significance also in intentions and efforts that seem fruitless. In a world which, even at its best, is distorted by sin, our most diligent work is often unsuccessful and our highest motives may be misunderstood. The judgment, however, affirms the fact that they are not

wasted and that they do make a difference, for the whole of our lives has eternal value.

In the third place, divine judgment means that there is a transcendent moral order, a fundamental moral dynamic, in the created universe. Thus actions, decisions and choices have moral as well as physical consequences. Without such a moral order, truly human existence would not be possible; for humanity is characterized by moral sensitivity and moral responsibility, and neither could occur apart from a moral order.

In this context, it is obvious that a relation to Christ is never merely a verbal claim; it always has behavioral consequences. It may be easy to say that Christ is Lord; but what finally counts is a genuine, and therefore active, commitment to His Father's will (Matt. 7:21). This is why "it is the consistent teaching of the New Testament that judgment will be according to works."¹⁶ It is not, however, what is accomplished that is the basis of divine judgment, but the seriousness of the commitment to act.

"The fact of judgment means that God takes us seriously, not only as members of the total reality of human being, but as individual persons."

The reality of the moral order means that sin cannot be ignored or taken lightly, either by God or by created moral beings; for sin is inimical to the future security of the universe. Because sin is rebellion against God, it is separation from the only Source of being. Thus, it may be regarded as inherently self-destructive. Because sin is also a misrepresentation of reality and therefore deceptive, it is intrinsically dangerous to other reality. Sin is disastrously contagious. Inasmuch as it is the very nature of God to care for His creation, He reacts against sin to destroy it. So we may also regard the end of sin as an act of divine judgment which radically rejects the sin that has rejected and contradicted God's love. So the heavenly temple is appropriately described as the source of a pronouncement of

judgment and of eschatological plagues (Rev. 14:15; 15:4-5).

In the fourth place, the divine judgment means that sin is not eternal; it is a temporary distortion of the created order. Sin is not intrinsic to the nature of reality, and its efficacy and duration are subject to the limits imposed by God. Often it seems that demonic powers in fact control the world — that evil is stronger than good, that hostility is more effective than love, that selfishness is more prosperous than generosity. Both nature and history seem to produce more brutality and tragedy than creativity and happiness, and the distribution of suffering is wretchedly uneven. But the judgment means that these appearances do not accurately represent the reality of the universe, and that the Enemy does not have the last word. That word belongs to Christ, the High Priest and Judge who "will appear a second time. . . to bring salvation to those who are watching for Him" (Heb. 9:28). The fact of judgment means the ultimate triumph of love.

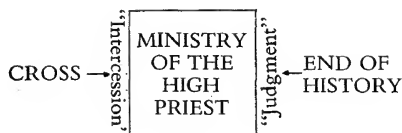
So the divine judgment associated with the ministry of the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary means, among other things, that God takes us seriously as responsible persons, that the totality of our lives is important, that there is an eternal moral order in the universe and that sin is only temporary in the universe. These implications, while sobering, combine to provide a profound sense of security — the same sense that was the initial intention of the apocalyptic documents which bring together the ideas of the sanctuary, divine judgment and the end of history.

Our further thinking about the Sanctuary may be clarified by the use of a simple conceptual model. The purpose of this model is to understand the relationship of the two complementary aspects of Christ's ministry as High Priest: intercession, as emphasized in Hebrews; and judgment, as pictured in the visions of Daniel and John.

These aspects may be regarded as two sides of the same reality. That is, there is an intrinsic relationship between them, so that we cannot speak of either one of them properly

and adequately without recognizing the reality of the other. Thus, for example, intercession inevitably points to judgment. For intercession is the availability of the salvation made possible at the cross; it is a gift of grace, an act of God on our behalf that is either accepted or rejected, claimed or repudiated, by its intended beneficiary. And the graciousness of the gift makes the positive or negative response to it the decisive eschatological issue. Again, looking at the relationship from the opposite direction, we see that judgment presupposes intercession.

So we can understand intercession as the work of the High Priest viewed from the standpoint of the cross, and judgment as the work of the High Priest viewed from the standpoint of the end of history:



Although the reality will, of course, appear quite differently when viewed from the two different standpoints, it remains the same reality. From either direction, it is the work of the one great High Priest whose priesthood is absolutely unique because His offering was Himself and whose ministry is the continu-

ing actualization of the self-giving love expressed at the cross.

It is thus understandable that when, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, a sense of the end of history is dominant in the religious consciousness, as it was in the biblical apocalyptic visions and again among the Adventists of the 1840s, the work of the High Priest is viewed primarily and properly in terms of judgment. And at the end of history, as the "great controversy" comes to its earthly climax — that is, as the Gospel is preached in its fullness and with unprecedented power and as demonic activity increases in intensity — the awareness of judgment is more profound than ever. Because this climax does not "just happen" on earth, but is the result of God's own activity in finishing His work, it is appropriately understood as the final work of our great High Priest. While this is not the whole meaning of the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, it is a meaning that is both correct and necessary in an authentically Adventist theology of the sanctuary. Yet it is best understood when its essential relation to the intercessory ministry of Christ is kept clearly in mind.

There seems to be no question about the theological or experiential value of our doctrine of the sanctuary. If we take it as seriously as we should and study it as thoroughly as we should, it will reveal a depth we have only begun to realize. It can become for us as exciting and powerful as it was to the earliest Seventh-day Adventists.

APPENDIX: BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Although much of the ground is familiar, it will be useful for us to review the developing understanding of the meaning of the sanctuary, beginning with the biblical materials and continuing through historical, contemporary and Adventist theology.

Biblical development. The whole Old Testament cultic ritual was related to the idea of atonement; that is, it was always a response to, and in some sense a remedy for, the human predicament of guilt and alienation resulting from sin. From the very first accounts, this is the meaning and function of sacrifice — from Cain and Abel through Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to Moses. The first uses of the words for "atonement" (Heb. *kaphar*, *kippurim*) occur in the instruction regarding the sacrifices for the consecration of the priesthood (Ex. 29:35-37); and the connection of the

entire sanctuary ritual with atonement is further confirmed in the description of various kinds of temple offerings (Lev. 1-7). The ritual climax is the annual Day of Atonement, which involves a ceremony of atonement for the sanctuary itself as well as the people (Lev. 16). Later, with the figure of the Suffering Servant who gives himself as a sin offering (Isa. 53), the idea of sacrifice as the solution to the problem of sin is transposed into a new key.

In the New Testament documents, the understanding of the sanctuary is developed in at least two ways. The first applies the sanctuary symbolism to the mission of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus understands Himself as giving His life "as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28), that is, sacrificing His body and blood (Mark 14:22-24; Matt. 26:26-28). In the Johannine

literature, Jesus is introduced as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36), and then symbolized apocalyptically as a Lamb that has been sacrificed but is now triumphant. The Pauline literature often refers to His death in terms of the sanctuary symbolism: He is the Paschal Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7); and redemption comes through His blood (Eph. 1:7), which is an expiation (Rom. 3:25).

The second way in which the New Testament develops the understanding of the sanctuary is in regard to the sanctuary in heaven. In contrast to the ancient shrines, priests and ceremonies, Hebrews asserts not only the ontological priority of the "true tabernacle" made by God Himself, but also the religious and theological superiority of the ministry of Christ as our High Priest in heaven (Heb. 8-10). Then Revelation adds yet another dimension, involving the sanctuary in heaven with history on earth: the heavenly "tabernacle" (*skene*) is pictured as the object of human blasphemy (13:6), the source of the seven plagues (15:5-6) and a part of the New Jerusalem (21:3); and the "temple" (*naos*) is described as the place of God's throne (7:15) — a place which includes an altar (11:2; 14:17-18), an ark (11:19) and worshippers (11:12); and also a place from which comes eschatological judgment (14:15, etc.) and in which the glory of God is evident (15:8). Several other elements also recall the Old Testament sanctuary: lampstands (1:12), priestly vestments (1:13) and a censer with its fire and smoke (9:4-5).

Historic Protestant theology. In the light of the explicit New Testament affirmation of a sanctuary in heaven and of the ministry of Christ as High Priest there, it is surprising that the subject has received so little theological attention apart from its incidental consideration in commentaries on the relevant passages in Hebrews and Revelation.¹⁷ It has, in fact, played a very small role in the systematic thought of major theological figures.

When Calvin introduced into his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and thus into Reformation thought, the idea of the threefold office (*munus triplex*) of Christ as prophet, priest and king,¹⁸ he understood the priesthood as having two principal components: (1) Christ's death, which blotted out our guilt¹⁹ and abolished the ceremonies of the Law,²⁰ and (2) His continuing intercessory ministry, which reconciles us to God and opens up for us a way into His presence,²¹ but which is denied by the sacrifice of the Mass.²² But Calvin also saw in Christ's priesthood two additional implications: (3) His identification with us in our infirmities,²³ and (4) the priesthood of believers.²⁴ Although Calvin recognized the objective reality of the heavenly sanctuary, he interpreted the reference to "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11) to be a symbol of the physical body of Christ.²⁵

At about the same time, the Lutheran theologian Melancthon offered a summary of Christ's functions (*officia*) as high priest:

(1) He proclaims the gospel. (2) He offers sacrifice for us. (3) He always prays for us. . . . (4) He also has the office of blessing, and He blesses not only by announcing the remission of sins but also by the fact that He Himself takes away sin and death, and returns life, since He is the living Logos of the eternal Father.²⁶

While this description of Christ's priestly service is

similar to Calvin's, it adds a "life-giving" element that increases its experiential relevance.

If the seed of a theology of the high-priestly ministry of Christ was planted by Calvin, its most noticeable growth occurred in the writings of his Puritan descendants in seventeenth-century England.²⁷ For them, this ministry was essential to human salvation, for it was this that made possible the spiritual growth of the Christian, especially through forgiveness but also through the guidance and persuasion of grace. In this connection, the Puritans developed a detailed typological understanding of the Old Testament sanctuary, which for them symbolized both the mission of Christ and the sanctuary in heaven. The heavenly sanctuary was thus regarded as certainly real, although not necessarily corresponding to its earthly shadow in regard to form and material. The Puritans noted the importance of the Day of Atonement, which they interpreted partly in juridical terms. But most of all, Christ's ministry as a heavenly high priest meant the assurance of God's interest in human lives and the impossibility of any meritorious human work of mediation.

Contemporary theology. In the twentieth century, Karl Barth has written extensively on almost every theological topic, including the Sabbath;²⁸ but he discusses the high priesthood of Christ in heaven only in two brief passages in his *Church Dogmatics*. In one, he emphasizes the exclusiveness of this priesthood, "for which there is no parallel," because Christ "is not only the One who offers sacrifice but also the sacrifice which is offered." Barth notes further that we can describe Christ's work either as His "high-priestly work" or as His "judicial work," and that either way "we shall mean and say exactly the same thing."²⁹ In the other passages, Barth stresses the continuation of Christ's ministry in our behalf: "He not only did but does stand before God for us," so that "today, now, at this very hour, [He is] our active and effective Representative and Advocate before God, and therefore the real basis of our justification and hope."³⁰

Other contemporary theologians have even less to say about our subject. Emil Brunner, first in his *Christology, The Mediator*, and later in *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, merely translates the traditional triplex form into the corresponding functions of revelation, reconciliation and dominion; he does not otherwise consider the idea of Christ's priestly ministry, much less the idea of a high-priesthood in heaven.³¹ And when G. C. Berkouwer devotes a chapter of *The Work of Christ* to the threefold office, he is more interested in the significance of triplicity as such than in the meaning of each element;³² he expounds Christ's priesthood only in terms of sacrifice, with no discussion of intercession at all.³³ To a small extent, however, the lack of systematic theological reflection on the ministry of Christ as high priest is reduced by the contribution of theologically inclined commentators on Hebrews, such as Wescott, Bruce and Cody.³⁴

Adventist thought. From the preceding brief survey, we may conclude that there is some significant theological precedent for our interest in the sanctuary in heaven and in the ministry of Christ as High Priest and our conviction that this is an important part of the total activity of God for our salvation. We may also conclude that the further development of a theology

of the sanctuary is a proper continuation of a long and distinguished (if also intermittent) history.

About a century and a half ago, Adventism integrated into its understanding of the sanctuary symbolism not only the Christological emphasis of the Letter to the Hebrews and of Puritan theology, but also the historical and eschatological emphases of biblical apocalyptic, including the prophecies of Daniel as well as Revelation, interpreted along the lines of the Advent expectation of 1844. Thus, in the light of Leviticus 16, Hebrews 8-10 and Daniel 7-9, two further, related ideas emerged. First, the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary was seen to involve two aspects — intercession and judgment, corresponding respectively to the usual, daily ceremonies in connection with the Holy Place of the Old Testament sanctuary, and to the annual Day of Atonement ceremony in connection with the Most Holy Place. Second, these two aspects were understood to be distinguished temporally, with the latter phase identified as an eschatological Day of Atonement or “cleansing of the sanctuary” beginning after the prophetic period of 2,300 evenings-mornings understood as historical years (Dan. 8:14).

In relation to this interpretive development, there was a need to clarify the meaning of the heavenly sanctuary itself and of its “cleansing.” Thus, Ellen White explained that “the sanctuary in heaven is the

very center of Christ's work in behalf of men,” and that His intercession there is “as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross.”³⁵ Concerning the eschatological “cleansing” of the heavenly sanctuary, she identified two major elements. On the one hand, it involves “an examination of the books of record”; its purpose is “to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement”; and it “must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people.”³⁶ And on the other hand, the “cleansing” of the heavenly sanctuary is also the ultimate meaning of the ancient ritual of the scapegoat: “the removal of sin from the heavenly sanctuary and the placing of those sins upon Satan,” which is involved in “the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners.”³⁷

Suggestions subsequently came from various others such as W. W. Prescott, who interpreted the “cleansing” in terms of a restoration of a correct understanding of the gospel after a long period of papal distortion;³⁸ M. L. Andreasen, who associated the “cleansing” with a vindication of God in the lives of a generation of people who live without sin;³⁹ and Edward Heppenstall, who understood the “cleansing” to be “a loving revelation from Christ of the righteous decisions in favor of those who have trusted in Him.”⁴⁰

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assoc., 1950), p. 423. Hereafter referred to as GC.

2. Cf. Hiram Edson, untitled manuscript fragment (Heritage Room, James White Library, Andrews University), pp. 8-9.

3. GC, 423.

4. Cf. P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 103-35; Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 4 vols. (Washington: Review and Herald, 1961-62), 1:97-113.

5. Cf. Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970); Edwin S. Gaustad, ed., *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Schacter, *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1956).

6. E.g., books related to judgment, Dan. 7:10; 12:1; Rev. 20:12; “book of remembrance,” Mal. 3:16; “the book of life,” Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27.

7. GC, 489.

8. Cf. Jack W. Provonsha, *God Is With Us* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1974), pp. 29-39.

9. Thus there is a relationship between the meaning of the high priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and the meaning of the Sabbath, which also symbolizes both the holiness of God and our relationship to Him.

10. Cf. Edward Fudge, *Our Man in Heaven: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973).

11. This is not my own phrase, but I have been unable to locate the source.

12. The continuing experiential impact of the cross is significant evidence of the validity of Christian truth claims. While the evidence of religious experience in general has often been noted, as by A. E. Taylor, “The Vindication of Religion,” in *Essay's Catholic and Critical*, ed. E. G. Selwyn (London: SPCK, 1926), pp. 70-81, and David Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 143-58, this particular point has not received the attention it deserves.

13. William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence: The Book of Hebrews Speaks to Our Day* (Nashville: Southern Publ. Assoc., 1979), p. 95.

14. Here again, the theological interrelationship between the Sabbath and the sanctuary become evident, for the Sabbath, too, is a matter of worship and of attention to the activity of God.

15. Dan. 7:10; 12:1; Rev. 20:12-15.

16. Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 66. Cf. Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:8; Rev. 22:12.

17. E. g., Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 6:19-20; 8:1-6; 9:11-14, 23-38; 10:11-22; and Rev. 7:15, 11:1-2, 19; 14:15; 15:5-8; 16:1, 17.

18. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xv.1; “The Catechism of the Church of Geneva,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. J. K. S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster, n.d.), p. 95. Calvin acknowledged that “the papists use these names, too,” and perhaps he was referring to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III.xxi.2: “Other men have this or that grace bestowed on this or that one, but Christ, as being Head of all, has the perfection of all graces. Wherefore, as to others, one is a lawgiver, another is a priest, another is a king; but all these

concur in Christ as the fount of all grace."

19. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xv.6; IV.xiv.21.

20. Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews*, "Theme"; *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 1, 3.

21. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xv.6; III.xv.17-20; IV.vi.2; "Catechism," p. 96; *Commentary on 1 Timothy 2:6*. Cf. Paul van Buren, *Christ in Our Place: The Substitutionary Character of Calvin's Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), pp. 89-91.

22. Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 51:9.

23. Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, 9:3; *Commentary on Hebrews*, 2:17.

24. Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xv.6: "Catechism," p. 96.

25. Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews*, 9:11.

26. Melancthon, *Annotationes in Evangelium Matthei*, caput 16, *Corpus Reformatorum* 14:889-90; translation supplied.

27. Cf. Bryan W. Ball, "A High Priest in Heaven," a chapter in a forthcoming book which deals with Puritan antecedents to Adventist theology. The most important primary source is John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, With Preliminary Exercitations*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854), 1:512-27; 2:3-259; 3:465-86; cf. also *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, 16 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850-53; London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 12:397-411.

28. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. in 13 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936-69), 3/1:98-99, 213-28; 3/4:47-72. Barth, Puritan theology, and Seventh-day Adventism are all distinguished by their

attention to both the Sabbath and the high-priestly ministry of Christ.

29. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4/1:275-77.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 314-16.

31. Emil Brunner, *The Mediator* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1934), pp. 399-590; *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952), pp. 270-315.

32. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 58-87.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-85.

34. For the purposes of the enterprise advocated here, some of the most useful in English are Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Macmillan, 1889; reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964); Aelfred Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publications, 1960).

35. *GC*, 488-89.

36. *GC*, 422.

37. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), p. 358.

38. W. W. Prescott, "Our Time and Work from the Prophetic Standpoint," *Review and Herald*, 16 December 1909.

39. M. L. Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1947), pp. 299-321; *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1948), pp. 417-70.

40. Edward Heppenstall, *Our High Priest: Jesus Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1972), p. 179; cf. pp. 157-85.